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SUBJECT: DUTCH PARLIAMENT DEBATES IRAQ

1. (SBU) Summary: On April 15, the Dutch parliament engaged debated Foreign Minister Bot and Defense Minister Kamp in a debate on the future of Iraq. Looming in the background is the government's upcoming decision whether to renew the deployment of Dutch troops currently in Iraq beyond July. with in the background the question as to whether Dutch troops should stay beyond June. Bot and Kamp parried opposition demands for a complete UN takeover as well as calls for criticism of U.S. strategy. Both the gGovernment and parliament agree on the desirability of a bigger UN role for the UN, in Iraq but Bot rejected athe callpremise put forward by the opposition Llabor (PvdA)Pparty spokesman Koenders to give the UN "the political "final responsibility" for all international efforts." Bot notedpointed out that the UN does not wantto assume such a role, and suggested doing so also because it would be wrong to havewould amount to Iraq being ruled again from the outside by another occupation force, so to speak. The goal after all is, he said toinstead of giving give "Iraq back to the Iraqis." Kamp robustlyardently defended the U.S. approach in Iraq and put down clearstrong markers for a renewedcontinued deployment stay of the Dutch troops. He warned that a Dutch pullout would have very negative consequences for the Iraqi people and underlined that . Moreover, tthe U.S. and UK have explicitly asked the Dutch to stay. Ambassador Sobel will follow up with Bot on April 22. By then, the dust will have settled and it will be clearer as to the effect of the debate on a possible extension. End Summary.

UN Role

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2. (U) Much of the debate centered onThe definition of the future role of the UN in Iraq was extensively debated. Bot recalled that the government has persistently soughtbeen pushing in past months for a more significant UN role; h. However, talks with UN SYG Kofi Annan and UN Sspecial Eenvoy Brahimi have made clear that to him in a recent meeting that the UN does not seek a dominant role. is not aspiring to assume a lead role. It would certainly not be advisable for the UN to take over the administration. For that reason, Accordingly, Bot rejectededopposed a resolution tabled by opposition Labor Party Foreign Affairs Spokesman Koenders callingthat called for giving for the UN to have "the political final responsibility" for all international efforts." Bot noted that Meanwhile, work continues on a new UNSCR resolution, the adoption of which, which heBot called desirable, and the goal of which is to get more countries involved but he expected that such a resolution would only be adopted by mid-June. The ultimate intention is to get more countries involved in the process. To that end, heHe said he had specifically discussed these issues with his French and German counterparts, and had observed a willingness on their parts on their part to consider sending troops if the UN role washas been more clearly defined.

3. (U) Overall, Bot was cautiously optimistic about the political developments in Iraq. He asserted that the noted that current violence trouble is primarily caused by small groups of extremists who do not have much support among the population. He said that those. Those who oppose the current process towards establishing democracy can be expected to continue to try to frustrate this process in every possible way. Bot was nonetheless was hopeful that it would be possible to get the security situation under control.

Arguments for stayingRenewing the Dutch deployment in Iraq

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4. (U) Defense Minister Kamp presented strongly arguedments in favor of a continuingued stay of the Dutch troop deployments in Iraq (note: the Dutch have approximately 1300 personnel serving in AlMuthanna province as part of the UK Multinational Division South-East). He notedFirst, the UN, U.S. and UK requests for the Dutch to remain and observed there would behave explicitly asked the Dutch to stay. There'd be "very negative consequences" for the Iraqi people," if they left. He also cited the importance of Dutch aAssistance to Japanese forces in AlMuthannawas cited as another reason for staying. He did allow forKamp referred to three three possible scenarios in which ituations in which the Dutch troops might bewould be

withdrawn: . "If the Iraqis no longer appreciate our presence; if the UN involvement does not become bigger, and if the security situation deteriorates so much that it would be no longer responsible to stay."

15. (U) Kamp said Meanwhile, preparations continue for relieving currently deployed the present troops. The Dutch are coordinating closely plan with the British, and byheKamp warned it would becomes more and more difficult to pull out as time passes, since other countries rely on the Netherlands. The Dutch relief forces are due to arrive in Iraq by mid-June to giving them a few weeks to acclimatize. AccordinglyThus, he said the final deadline for anthe extension decision would beis mid-June, but preferably earlier. Both Bot and Kamp supportedwere positive about a larger future role for NATO in Iraq, although they said for the moment NATO is very much preoccupied with Afghanistan.

16. (U) A majority of MPs from the three coalition parties, the Christian Democrats, the Liberals and the Liberal Democrats, are inclined to support the extension, while the smaller Green Left party and the Socialist party are opposed. While the main opposition Labor Party supported the initial Dutch deployment and its first renewal, it now states it will not support a renewal unless the UN is granted a "lead role" and the entire strategy is "radically changed." (Comment:CDA, VVD and D66 the political problem is that the Dutch prefer to have the main opposition onboard for deployment decisions. Technically the government has enough votes without the Labor party or the smaller far left parties, but it would be a significant shift to proceed without them. End comment).

17.

178. (U) The debate disintegrated after Green Left Foreign Affairs Sspokesperson Karimi tried hard to induceprovoke either Bot or Kamp to criticize the U.S. for its handling of affairs in Iraq. Neither but they did not riserose to the bait. Kamp . In fact, Kamp was delivered a strong and lengthy defense of U.S. actions and objectives, noting that the U.S. was "investing tens of billions in Iraq" and that the main goal of the U.S. is to "bring about improvements for the people, to transfer power to them, and to leave the country as soon as possible." He said the Netherlands is "glad to be part of that" and "just like President Bush, I say in all modesty, we won't stay a day longer than is strictly necessary." to present such a strong defense of the U.S. approach and its objectives that he managed to disgust both Karimi and Koenders. When In response to Kamp's remarks Karimi shouted that she had to throw up, and Kamp advised her to see a doctor. Koenders then stalked out of was so angry that he left the parliament in a huff shouting that there was no point in talking to a minister who resorts to "taking the moral high ground."

18. (SBU) Comment: Such antics are uncommon in the Dutch parliament. Dutch MFA contacts, perhaps relieved that Koenders and Karimi had not been able to corner the ministers, said the exchange was more reminiscent of the British parliament. Bot and Kamp robustly defended the Dutch role in Iraq and laid down markers for a future debate on the renewal of the deployment. Even so, we anticipate further tough debates leading up to a renewal, especially since a decision will likely need to be made before consideration of a UNSCR is completed. End comment.

SOBEL